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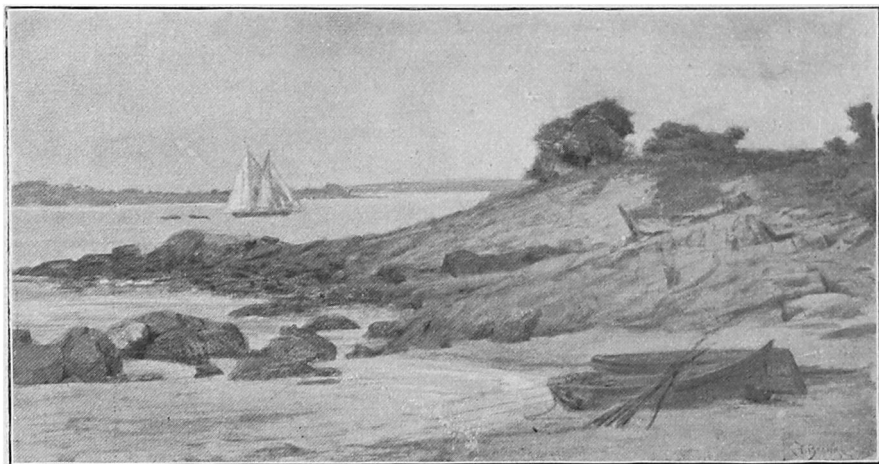
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GRAY DAY AT CUSHING'S ISLAND, BY CHARLES FRANCIS BROWNE.

Purchased by the Culture Club.

A CHICAGO RENAISSANCE?

NO period in the history of art has so inspired artists as that halcyon era we call the Renaissance. It is assumed, too often, that like Lord Byron, who awoke one morning and found himself famous, so the art world one year in the fifteenth century rubbed the dust out of its eyes of intelligence and behold, it was born anew! Such an exaggerated description of that marvelous intellectual awakening throughout Europe needs only to be suggested to prove its falsity. The new birth of art did not happen, it came only after long periods of waiting and longing and toiling; men waiting for some stimulus to higher thinking; longing, unconsciously perhaps, for higher ideals; and toiling on in the dark, unappreciated by their ignorant and mercenary human environment. There was the darkness of artistic ignorance before the dawn of the art reformation.

Here in the West, where kings of commerce have created industrial empires in a day, and where material prosperity is made to bloom with each returning spring, we are apt to forget that art in the broader sense is not created but must be evolved. Chicago cannot command, and lo,

art exists. There must be the preparation, the longing, the agonizing period before the new birth. The development of art is a slow process, its delicate organism may be easily stunted. But time is showing that there is life, development, growth. There is much in our Western art



STE. JEANNE DE CHANTAL, BY PAULINE A. DOHN.

Purchased by the Chicago Woman's Club.

world that is disheartening, but there is, too, that which is hopeful. Perhaps the most discouraging cloud that has overhung Chicago's artistic life has been the apathy toward men and women working to produce works worthy of recognition. What shall it profit a city if there be added to

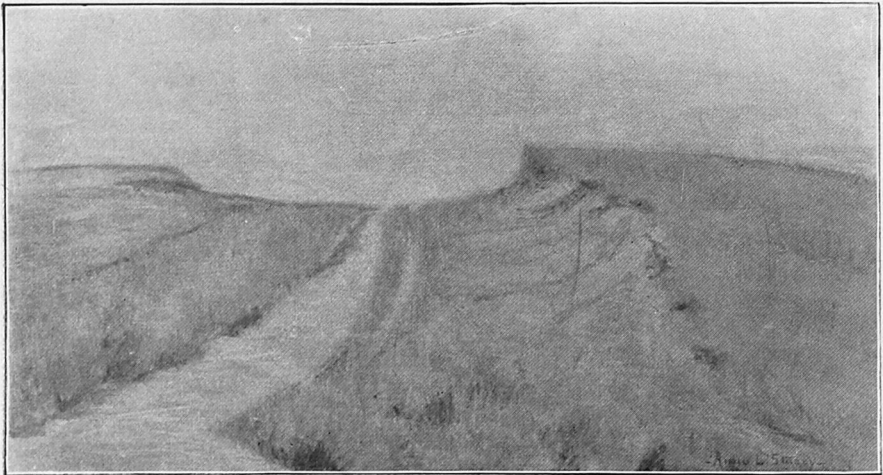


WINTER PLANTING, BY JOHN H. VANDERPOEL.

Purchased by the West End Woman's Club.

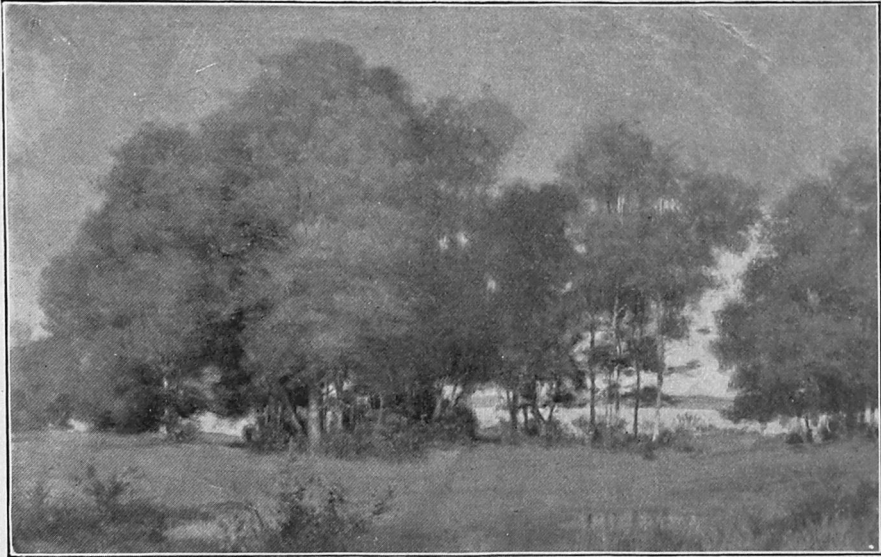
its galleries costly foreign canvases bought for the sake of the names painted upon them and of a vainglorious ambition, while men who have it within them to produce masterpieces are starving in the garret-like studios of the buildings owned by the princely collectors? Art is not thus fostered. Nor can one discover why an artist's work in a studio in the Latin Quarter, Paris, is worth so much more than the same man's work when produced in the Tree Studio building. Yet there is evidence that there is some occult force which leads some people to buy pictures on the Rue Lafitte, while refusing even to look at paintings on Wabash avenue.

There is some evidence that this condition of affairs is changing. An indication of the advance of an intelligent appreciation of art in Chicago, for surely there is progress, is found in the recent exhibition of the works by Chicago artists held under the auspices of the Chicago Art Association at the Art Institute. More competent pens have described this exhibit from the artist's point of view, but I have been asked to suggest some of the significant facts which reveal right tendency and hopeful advance, as discovered in this exposition of local art. It is not the character of the exhibit itself, excellent as it was, of which I write, but of some of the encouraging signs of the times as there exemplified. Those of us who have lived in Chicago a decade or two cannot have failed to observe the lack of sympathy for the guild of resident artists of which I have spoken; a coldness which has so frosted ambition and zeal as to have driven them to more kindly latitudes. Now we find a large company of



A BY-ROAD OF JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN, BY ANNA L. STACY.

Purchased by the Niké Club.



MOONLIGHT, BASS LAKE, INDIANA, BY CHARLES FRANCIS BROWNE.

Purchased by the Arché Club.

nonprofessional men and women so willing to let the warmth of their sympathy extend to the artists of the city that they have formed an association whose "object shall be the promotion of art in the city of Chicago."

Several groups of these sympathetic lovers of the beautiful, and notably the women, planned to purchase works of art when this exhibit, the first of the sort, was opened; not simply to look and to admire, but to act, to show sympathy by deeds. The members of several of these organizations, federated under the name of the Chicago Art Association, determined also that these purchases should not be made by jury or committee, but only after an artistic plebiscite of the members. The result has been that hundreds of women—for this innovation was especially characteristic of the women's clubs—have spent hours in careful study of the merits of various works of art. Animated discussions upon the relative merit of this canvas and that, whether this picture is true to nature, whether the drawing of that is correct, and the color of another good, have brought hundreds of intelligent women to examine the fundamental principles which must decide the true value of a work in the realm of art. As one looks over the list of works chosen by this method he cannot but praise the good judgment expressed. But even had serious blunders been made, the votes, the study, would not have been in vain.

It is refreshing, too, to recall the fact that in large measure the prize-giving period in these clubs has passed. Prizes may have their place in the development of art, but the purchase plan just referred to is far superior. Artists do not enjoy being put in the position of continually needing and seeking "encouragement" and "recognition." If they produce something commendable, a medal or an "honorable mention" will not prove an irresistible incentive to create something better, neither does it materially assist in paying the bill of the framemaker. But the fact that thoughtful, observing and sympathetic friends have found in their work beautiful qualities in such degree as to cause them to buy it, is an act which appeals to manly instincts and fosters laudable ambition.

There remains one other fact pointing to hopeful advance, which may be mentioned. There is no virtue in shutting one's eyes to the disagreeable fact that the artists of the city have done much to hurt their own cause by their childish jealousies, and their public denunciations of the work of their fellows. These boyish quarrels have prevented any adequate exposition of the work of the entire group of competent men and women. This exhibit of the Chicago Art Association has offered a dignified opportunity to artists of every school, of every club, of every clique, if they be qualified only, to show their work where it may be seen by the most sympathetic art lovers in the city. Is it too much to hope that as a result of successive exhibits, the bickering and pettiness of the former winter of discontent may become glorious summer?

The present exhibit, then, in appreciation of local art conditions and needs; in wisely planned methods for meeting these needs; in thoughtful study of the principles of true art; in generous recognition of work well done; in offered opportunity for coöperation of layman with artist, and artist with artist, marks a sure step of progress toward a possible Renaissance in Chicago. May that bright day hasten its coming.

JAMES SPENCER DICKERSON.